



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Helene Nelson, Secretary

May 5, 2006
For Immediate Release

Helene Nelson: Health Insurance for All Kids
May 1-7 is Cover the Uninsured Week

What do you do when your child comes down with a fever that just won't go away? If you are like most Wisconsinites, you call your family doctor. But if you are like the thousands of working families in Wisconsin who don't have access to affordable health insurance, your child will likely endure the illness without treatment or prescription medication unless it becomes an emergency, and in some cases, becomes a much more critical illness.

In Wisconsin, seven percent of our residents were without health insurance at any given point in time in 2004. This includes the 91,000 children who were without health insurance for at least part of the year.

What we know to be true is that people who have access to health care, particularly primary preventative care, tend to be healthier and they can avoid more expensive care due to untreated disease. And people who have health insurance are likelier to access care. For example, according to the Institute of Medicine, uninsured children are less likely than insured children to receive preventative well-child check ups and immunizations or get their prescriptions filled.

Governor Jim Doyle has issued a challenge for state government to do what it can to ensure that residents have access to high quality, affordable health care. We don't want people to have to wait until they become critically ill before getting health care they need and deserve. It just makes sense. And in particular, we believe no child should ever be without health insurance.

We are working to make our beliefs a reality.

We are developing a proposal called BadgerCare Plus that will provide health insurance for all kids in Wisconsin and expand the eligibility of the current BadgerCare program to include more adults. With BadgerCare Plus, we can improve the overall health of the people of Wisconsin and make sure no one has to "ration" care for their children.

Working to make health care affordable will take the expertise of health care providers, advocates, social workers, policy makers, and – yes – families like yours. We are holding forums around the state and encourage people to share with us the obstacles families face in obtaining affordable health insurance. We ask you to tell us what kind of care is important to you. And we urge you to ask your state representative to work with us to develop this proposal so all kids have access to health insurance.

Every child deserves to have a pediatrician who can chart his growth and will make sure a common ear infection doesn't leave him deaf. And every child deserves to have a doctor who will make sure she has

Wisconsin.gov

1 West Wilson Street • Post Office Box 7850 • Madison, WI 53707-7850 • Telephone (608) 266-9622 • dhfs.wisconsin.gov

all the proper immunizations or who will oversee treatment for serious conditions she may face, for example diabetes. Our children deserve it. Together, we can make it happen.

Let's see to it that all kids in Wisconsin are safe, healthy and ready for success.

Helene Nelson is the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. The Department protects and promotes the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin.

Comments can be emailed to badgercareplus@dhfs.state.wi.us.

- END -